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ABSTRACT

A 6-month, qualitative study of the nature of literate behavior in the pretend play episodes of eight preschool children resulted in a taxonomy of their pretend play activity. Data were gathered in a setting where teachers implemented a cognitively oriented curriculum that encouraged language development and problem solving through play. Typically, 20 to 30 minutes of the 2-hour daily sessions were allotted to free play activity. In addition to children, the primary caregivers of the children served as informants. Spradley's (1979) domain analysis was used to sort and categorize interview and observational data. Five kinds of pretend play activity emerged as characteristic of the large domain of pretend play for these players. From simple to complex, these activities included: (1) play with real objects, play like someone or something, and making up people, places, and things; (2) pretend play schemes characterized by presence of a topic; and (3) pretend play episodes characterized by presence of a problem. The construction of the taxonomy is described and cross-referenced with other research on pretend play. Relationships between the kinds of pretend play activity are suggested. Implications of the story-like qualities of the more complex kinds of pretend play activity for literacy development are briefly discussed. (RH)

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A Taxonomy of Pretend Play Activity With Some Implications For Literacy Development

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A TAXONOMY OF KINDS OF PRETEND PLAY ACTIVITY

Title: A TAXONOMY OF PRETEND PLAY ACTIVITY WITH SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

ABSTRACT

Based on findings from a six month qualitative study of the nature of literate behavior in the pretend play episodes of eight preschoolers, the construction of a taxonomy of their pretend play activity is described and cross-referenced with other pretend play research. Relationships between the kinds of pretend play activity as demonstrated by the 8 youngsters are suggested. Implications of the story-like qualities of the more complex kinds of pretend play activity for literacy development are also briefly discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Play is a 'clown', a 'prankster' (Vandenberg, 1982) - a puzzle, a riddle (Bergen, 1988) - a "soup of behavior" (Miller, 1973)! As Bergen (1988, p. 27) has so neatly pointed out, when researchers undertake studies involving play behavior they not only must address methodological concerns, but also the nature of play itself. How does the researcher clearly talk about "something of which everyone has a good intuitive grasp but little or nothing in the way of concepts that lend themselves to articulation" (Miller, 1973, p. 87)? Ranging across "families of meaning" and resisting categorization (Sutton-Smith, 1980, p.14), play seems to 'play hide-and-seek' with the those trying to catch hold of it (Vandenberg, 1982, p. 15).

In a recent study (Roskos, 1987), designed to explore literate behavior in the pretend play episodes of eight preschool youngsters, the nature of play, specifically pretend play, was a central concern. Before a search for literate behavior could be undertaken, pretend play episodes needed to be located in streams of play activity, framed, and described, thus leading the research activity into definitional issues of play at the outset. In this paper, a a brief overview of this six month investigation is shared, in particular the research decisions about pretend play as a

construct. Then one set of findings emerging from the study is described, specifically a taxonomy of pretend play activity which enriches understanding of pretend play activity and points toward relationships between it and literacy development.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Based on two premises, first that literacy learning begins long before children enter the school doors (Bissex, 1980; Clark, 1976; Clay, 1967; Durkin, 1974; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984) and second that play may be an early childhood activity which influences literacy development (Heath, 1982, 1984, 1986; Jacob, 1977, 1984; Pellegrini, 1985; Scarlett & Wolf, 1979), a study was undertaken to probe literate behavior within the pretend play of preschoolers. The study was guided by one question: What is the nature of literate behavior in the pretend play episodes of four and five year old children?

However, as already indicated, play as a construct lacks precision (Bergen, 1988; Christie & Johnson, 1983; Fein, 1979) hampering research efforts and limiting validity of findings. A number of realities surrounding play research account for this lack of precision. First, the behavior has yet to be clearly differentiated from other types of behavior, e.g., exploration and social interaction

(Christie & Johnson, 1983), a problem derived from the broader and pervasive problem of definition. When is behavior 'play'?

Second, play does not yield readily to controlled research conditions prompting the 'switch-on' issue in play research: simply requesting youngsters to play does not guarantee that the richness and depth of such behavior will follow (Simon & Smith, 1985, p. 275). The question needs to be asked: Have researchers actually observed genuine play or some 'cheap' imitation of it?

Third, many play studies employing experimental designs are short in duration (from a few minutes to a few days) producing a rather limited and fragmented picture of the behavior (Christie & Johnson, 1983, p. 110; Krasnor & Pepler, 1980). This raises concern about the adequacy of descriptions of play in general: Just how complete is the research picture of play behavior?

For these reasons and others, Christie and Johnson (1983) suggest that "a great need exists for further descriptive and ethnographic studies to investigate the very nature of playful behavior...It is hoped that such studies eventually will result in a more accurate conceptualization of play" (p. 111). Bergen (1988) concurs commenting "play

research is still in its infancy...and attention to research methods is of major importance..." (p. 27).

Considering this, certain subsidiary questions were employed to adequately address the primary question:

- What constitutes naturally-occurring pretend play activity of four and five year olds?
- What characterizes a pretend play episode?
- What is the resemblance between episode and story?

In the study, literate behavior was identified by activities, skills, and knowledge consisting of reading-and writing-like acts, such as pretending to read and scribbling (Downing, 1979; Goodman, 1983). To define pretend play, it was decided to use both Garvey's work (1977) and that of Schwartzman (1978) as research frames of reference because their work treated pretend play as a whole event and focused on play language or text. Garvey's definition of pretend play was selected to guide initial observations of pretend play activity. She distinguishes pretend activity from other activity by changes in the here and now, you and me, this and that (Garvey, 1977). Fein's (1979) descriptive categories of symbolic transformations served to detail this definition, namely decontextualization, self-other transformations, and substitution. When these specific changes co-occurred based on some plan or setting, e.g.,

restaurant, the play was referred to as a pretend play scheme (Fein, 1979; Garvey, 1977). If a scheme was sustained for five minutes or more, it was termed a pretend play episode in the intial stages of the study. Although alluded to in play research (Bruner, 1983; Garvey, 1977; Miller & Garvey, 1984), sustained pretend episodes in preschooler play seem neither well-defined nor described.

METHOD

A qualititative research approach rooted primarily in the tradition of cognitive anthropology (see Chilcott, 1987, p.207 & Jacob, 1988, p.13 for a brief overview of this specific qualitative research tradition) was selected to explore the nature of literate behavior in the pretend play episodes of preschoolers for two reasons. First, this approach facilitated observations of literate behavior as it naturally occurred in play activity. Second, it allowed certain needs in play research to be addressed: the need for descriptive data gathered in situ, an emic view of pretend play activity, and sustained observations over time (Bergen, 1988; Krasnor & Pepler, 1980; Simon & Smith, 1985; Sutton-Smith, 1980).

Setting

A preschool program housed in a public school in a small northeastern Ohio city was the setting of the study.

Based on the Cognitively Oriented Curriculum (Hohman, Banet, & Weikart, 1979), the teachers had created an active learning environment that encouraged language development and problem solving through play. Typically 20-30 minutes of the two-hour daily sessions were allotted to 'free' play activity.

Informants

Five girls (one set of twins) and three boys, ranging in age from 4-5 years to 5-3 years, were selected as informants based on their typicality of this age child, including evidence of normal intelligence, normal speech and physical development, a stable home life, and regular attendance in the preschool. Figure 1 summarizes initial descriptive data about the eight informants.

Insert Figure 1 about here

The primary caregiver(s) of the eight children (in most cases the mother) were automatically included as informants in the study since these individuals could also provide information about the children's play activities.

Procedures

Data were collected over a six-month period, January through June, 1986. Three strategies were used to obtain multiple perspectives on the pretend play activity of the eight children and the literate behavior occurring within it:

- a series of audiotaped, ethnographic interviews (Spradley, 1979) were conducted with the children and their primary caregiver(s) resulting in 43 transcribed interviews;
- videotaping of pretend play activity during "free play" time was conducted on a regular basis as a form of nonparticipant observation (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984) totaling 1860 minutes of videotaped and transcribed pretend play activity;
- collection of literacy artifacts produced during pretend play episodes in the preschool and home setting provided documents for analysis (a total of 73).

Data Analysis

Spradley's (1979) domain analysis served as the primary analytical tool for sorting and categorizing the interview and observational data. The interview data were analyzed on the basis of semantic relationships which emerged about pretend play; the semantic relationship classifying play into kinds was the relationship of primary interest. Informant-expressed terms and phrases for kinds of pretend play activity were distinguished, cross-referenced with research-based terminology, and employed as labels for categories of kinds of pretend play activity.

Videotaped data were scanned for indications of voluntary transformations in behavior or changes in the here and now, coded H/N, changes in the you and me, coded S/O, and changes in the this and that, coded SUB (substitution) (Fein, 1979; Garvey, 1977). A collection of transformations clustering around a topic or setting, such as 'house', and sustained 60 seconds or more was labelled a scheme and coded COLL. A scheme sustained for five minutes or more was identified as a pretend play episode and coded PPE. These indicators of pretend play activity were logged, sorted and cross-referenced with the informant-based play categories generated from the interview data.

A TAXONOMY OF PRETEND PLAY ACTIVITY OF EIGHT PRESCHOOLERS

To describe the pretend play activity of the players, the language of the parents and children themselves was the primary source of meaning. Terms and constructs in the research base were used to amplify, guide and unify informant-expressed concepts of pretend play activity (Fein, 1979; Garvey, 1977; Matthews, 1977; Schwartzman, 1977, 1978; Yawkey, 1983).

Based on the interview and videotape data, a taxonomy of the pretend play activity of the eight players was developed and is displayed in Figure 2. In brief, five kinds

of pretend play activity emerged as characteristic of the large domain pretend play for these players.

Insert Figure 2 about here

Simpler Pretend Play Activity

Play with objects, a kind of pretend play prefixed by the phrase "play with," involved the manipulation of a concrete object or thing. The following interview excerpts illustrate such play.

- He likes to play with Play-Doh. He was makin' chicken noodle soup, he told me. He would cut up Play-Doh in little chunks here and use my spatula and pretend he was cookin' (Michael's mother).

- "Playin' with my sister's Barbies. (They) talk together (about) important stuff" (Michael S., age 4).

When the phrase 'play with' was used, the object being manipulated was usually a scaled-down version or replica of something in real life, e.g., a truck, a car, a baby doll. Such play was often accompanied by sound effects, i.e., motor sounds, imitations of crying, changes of pitch in voice, ringing sounds. Yawkey (1983) refers to this kind of pretend play as 'make-believe with objects'.

Among these players, there seemed to be a variation of this kind of pretend play activity involving generic objects and things, like clay and sand, such that when these were manipulated a construction resulted. When parents and children talked about 'play with' less lifelike items or objects, they tended to use the phrase 'take and make' to refer to this kind of pretend play activity. This is highlighted in the interview excerpts below:

- They take 'Lincoln Logs' and make houses (Adam's mother).
- She would take sand and make food (Sheona's mother).

'Take and make' tended to result in 'play with'. The 'take and make' variation may actually represent a more advanced form of this kind of pretend play activity. The children appeared less reliant on lifelike objects to bring about pretend activity; they took any thing and defined it as if real, then 'played with' the construction. A striking example of this was the repeated making of cakes in the sandbox at the preschool. The children mounded up sand as if a cake, frosted it, put make-believe candles in it, cut it, etc. They would spend much time (15-20 minutes) making the cake, talking about it, and eventually pretending to it. "We're makin' a beautiful cake." Later, "Pretend we have to put eggs in it. We better put some sprinkles on." Then, "Now let's cut our cake. Munch...I'm gonna have the strawberries."

Research supports the supposition that such actions may be a more advanced form of pretending (Overton & Jackson, 1973; Golomb, 1977; Matthews, 1977; Elder & Pederson, 1978; McLoyd, 1980). As children age, they become less dependent on exact replicas or even concrete objects to carry out sustitutions.

Play like someone or something involved enactment. When parents and children talked about this kind of play, the word "play" tended to be used in an action sense, as in to act or perform. For example:

- She plays "like she's the mommy. Mainly it's like whatever we have done, you know. Like 'Now we're goin' to the store' and she puts things in purses...she likes that" (Jackie's mother).

The data collected about this kind of pretend play corroborated Garvey's (1977) observation that three types of roles, sometimes overlapping, are involved: functional roles like babysitter or food server, character roles like He-Man or Princess Leah, and family roles, such as mommy or daddy.

When children engaged in the 'play like' kind of pretend play, they used gestures, facial expressions, language and terms characteristic of the role, exaggerated body movements, and changes in pitch of voice. Parents sometimes referred to this as 'mimicking', e.g.,"Like she mimics me or mimics other people...where she's been, what

she's heard, you know, what she's seen, she does that. Like she plays that kind of role" (Jackie's mother). Yawkey (1983) labelled this kind of pretend play as 'imitative role play'. Sometimes it is called roletaking or self-referencing (Fein, 1981).

To make up people, places, and things was most closely associated with pretending or make-believe by the informants. "Well, like an imaginary friend, that's make-believe (Jackie's mother) or "I pretend when I play all by myself. I pretend there's a sister and a brother" (Sarah, age 4). 'Making up' involved creating or inventing something or someone from customers to beaches to vehicles and was a phrase often used interchangeably with the word 'pretending'.

Complex Pretend Play: Schemes and Episodes

The pretend play scheme appeared to be a more complex kind of play because it included play with objects, play like someone or something, and the making up of people, places, and things (multiple transformations) clustered about a topic or setting (Garvey, 1977; Miller & Garvey, 1984). Typically, the word "play" was used to prefix the general context in which the pretend play scheme would be played out, as in "play store," "play house," or "play babies."

An example of a pretend play scheme is described in the box below. It represents an instance when Jackie "plays babies" as described by her mother. The topic of this scheme is caring for babies.

> "Well now, since its been nice, she brings the babies out and now she has a baby tub to wash them up in. She washes the babies up and then she lays them - she puts them in bed. She goes, 'OK, baby, now that you're all ready, would you like to lay down? Then she reads a little story and then she'll go, 'Now it's time for bed.' Then she covers them up and then she goes out to shop for a while. She's got a little shopping cart. She gets in the cupboard and she gets groceries. Then she takes them back in the room and she goes, 'Mom's home'"

Data revealed a number of popular pretend play schemes, such as taking a trip, cooking, caring for a baby, and children seemed to know intuitively what to do when a scheme was introduced. Fein (1979) defines the play scheme as 'collective symbolization' and views it as a collection of transformations; Garvey (1977) describes it broadly as social play with materials, and Yawkey (1983) labels it 'make believe with actions and situations' and 'roleplaying'.

The pretend play episode was described by parents as a kind of play which consisted of "telling stories" or "creating a sequence of events". It seemed to emerge out of a play scheme and to possess story-like qualities. Garvey (1977) also commented on this quality of schemes and suggested that, at times, certain schemes tended to produce

episodes or story lines; however, she did not explore these in depth.

Repeated observation of the videotaped pretend play schemes of the eight players revealed that some of their schemes were more story-like than others. A checklist procedure, outlined in Figure 3, was developed to locate and bracket episodes within streams of pretend play activity.

Insert Figure 3 about here

Using this checklist, forty-one episodes were located in the pretend play activity of these eight children. Data analyses of episode transcripts (analytic induction, Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; story grammar, Stein & Glenn, 1979) revealed three distinguishing features of the pretend play episode: an organizing topic or theme which coheres and sustains the play-talk and action, sequential stages of construction which strongly resemble a story grammar (Stein & Glenn, 1979), and recurrence. Findings related to the pretend play episode specifically are addressed elsewhere (Roskos, 1987).

THE TAXONOMY: SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

The ethnographic record indicated that within the play category designated as pretend play, there appeared to be five kinds of pretend play activity as demonstrated by the eight children. These were identified as play with real objects, play like someone or something, making up places, people, and/or things and the more complex kinds: schemes and episodes. Based on these categories, a taxonomy of pretend play activity of the eight players was constructed.

Of the five kinds of pretend play activity, three of these, namely, play with real objects, play like someone or something, and making up people, places, and/or things, were referred to as simpler pretend play activities since they could occur separately from one another. For example, when four year old Adam 'made up' his friend the bear of many colors, he did not 'play like someone/something' nor did he 'play with' a real object. Likewise Michael S., age 4, did not 'play like someone' nor necessarily 'make up' anything, like a setting, when he played with his toy cars.

Schemes and episodes, on the other hand, appeared to be more complex and denser kinds of pretend play activity. They were dependent not only on the presence of the three simpler kinds of activity, but also on the convergence of these about a topic or setting. For example, when Sarah, age 4,

said she was going to "play house," a popular pretend play scheme, she would integrate the other kinds of pretend play around the topic 'house'. She would play with real objects, such as dishes and utensils. She would play like she's a mom. She would make up a kitchen setting and perhaps even children to go in it. If the scheme were sustained and induced a problem, e.g., now Sarah has a sick baby, then an episode resulted.

The relationship between the kinds of pretend play activity may be likened to a funnel as depicted in Figure 4.

Insert Figure 4 about here

On the rim of the funnel are those three kinds of play activity that may function independently of one another; each may represent a simpler kind of pretend play activity. When all three converge about a topic, a scheme results. Schemes appear to be like outlines which loosely map the actions and talk of the players as they play with objects, take on roles, and make up people, places and/or things. The eight players in this study seemed to have a repertoire of schemes and would refer to them by using the word 'play' as a prefix or signal for the onset of the scheme. "Play

house," "play bank," "play babies," "play school" are a few examples.

Schemes, in turn, may result in pretend play episodes if they are sustained and the topic is detailed about a problem or a concern to the point where a simple plot emerges. That is to say, the pretend play episode seemed to possess distinct story-like qualities: a setting complete with characters, a time and location for the action, a specific purpose or goal and a plot with chains of situations which 'play out' the story purpose.

Taken together, schemes and episodes seem to represent more complex forms of pretend play activity because they require the player(s) to coordinate things, people, and inventions into some integrated accounting or whole - a kind of overt story making (Wells, 1986). Said another way, the play, as it complicates, appears to converge toward story as a narrative form which is employed so that the fiction or the invented world can be sustained. Said still another way, the "tale's the thing... for catching and fixing meaning" in the play experience (Egan, 1987, p. 455). At this point, some lucrative implications of pretend play episodes for literacy development surface and frame two intriguing literacy connections.

One of these has to do with the substantial line of inquiry pursued by Scarlett and Wolf (1979) who have suggested that symbolic play transforms into narrative as consciousness of the boundary between fantasy and reality develops "making possible a new and precise understanding of pretense which permits both the internal organization and social sharing of make-believe" (p. 32). They view diminished need for concrete props, increased reliance on language to convey meaning, and improved story lines in pretend play as indicators of this developing consciousness.

Clearly the taxonomy supports this view. "New and precise" understandings of pretense seem to emerge in pretend play schemes and consolidate in the pretend play episode, perhaps a culminating event in the long history of emancipation of narrative from action (Vygotsky, 1967, pp.12-13 & 1978, p. 116). It could be hypothesized that the pretend play episode may be the most complex kind of preschooler pretend play activity being more a case of play inside a story than the other way round. That is to say, the pretend play episode may be manifesting the transformation from play activity into narrative: youngsters literally 'act out' narrative which may be gradually progressing from external to internal organization. It would not seem far-fetched to suggest that participation in episode building may have implications for story schema development

on a number of levels, not the least of which is the actual physical involvement.

Another connection between pretend play and literacy development has to do with a recent discussion by Egan (1987) on the transition from orality to literacy. He describes these key features of orality: its reliance on memory "by building messages into stories" (p.455); the significance of sound - "alive and participatory...charged with the direct energy of the speaker's body and thus with the speaker's hopes, fears, wants, needs and intentions" (p.458); and the use of narrative as a means of classifying and explaining realities - "the personalization of theory" (Goody in Egan, p. 462).

Although different from literacy as a set of strategies, Egan demonstrates how orality is as bon à penser (good for thinking with) as literacy and how a better understanding of the set of tactics that constitutes orality - the nature of the story making - may hold promise for our understanding of literacy as a tool for thinking with. Egan (along with many others, e.g., Goodman, 1986; Meek, 1982; Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984; Holdaway, 1979; Snow, 1983) argues that in the early years of schooling literacy instruction should grow out of, not displace the oral culture of childhood. The rhymes, songs, chants, games, and play-stories of youngsters - shapers of sound into memorable

form - pave the way into literacy as another medium for thinking with. In a sense, as literacy researchers and educators we need to find and use the rich oral culture of youngsters "if we want to make what we want to teach [young children] engaging and meaningful (Egan, 1987, p. 469; see also Goodman, 1986). The taxonomy of pretend play activities, as described here, may ease entree into one small sector of that oral culture of youngsters and permit us to study more closely the stories that hold it. A thick descriptive data base about the pretend play activity of children and the orality which pervades it may ultimately build bridges to a fuller understanding of literacy and how to teach it.

According to the poet, Joachim Gasquet, Cezanne once said, "The day is coming when a single carrot, freshly observed [in a painting], will set off a revolution" (Gasquet,1921; Rewald, 1986). Certainly not revolution in the elementary curriculum, but that day is coming when such a commonplace activity as pretend play "freshly observed" in the context of schooling may at least prompt reconsideration of its worth in the language teaching of young children.

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Figure Captions

Figure 1. A descriptive summary of the eight children selected as informants.

Figure 2. A procedure for isolating pretend play episodes in streams of pretend play activity.

Figure 3. A taxonomy of kinds of pretend play activity.

Figure 4. Relationship between the kinds of pretend play activity.

NOTES

1. The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) is an individually administered, norm-referenced test of receptive vocabulary. It is available in two parallel forms designated L and M. Each form includes 175 test items arranged in an order of increasing difficulty. Each item has four illustrations. The child is to select the picture illustrating best the meaning of a word presented orally by the examiner. Testing requires approximately 10-20 minutes. Scoring is quick and simple. Raw scores are converted to age-referenced norms, standard score equivalents (reported for the study participants), percentile rank, and stanines.

   A summary of validity findings indicates that the PPVT correlates most highly with vocabulary, moderately well with other tests of aptitude, and to a reasonable degree with school achievement; a median correlation of .62 with the Stanford Binet is reported (Dunn & Dunn, 1981).

   Source: American Guidance Service
   Publishers' Building
   P.O. Box 99
   Circle Pines, MN 55014

2. The Concepts About Print Test (Clay, 1979) checks a child's concepts about printed language. The child is given a small booklet, Sand or Stones. The child is asked to help the examiner read the book. While reading the booklet with the child, the examiner probes about, observes, and evaluates the following.

   a) concepts about book orientation,

   b) concepts about whether print or pictures carry the text message,

   c) concepts about directionality of lines of print, page sequence, and directionality of words,

d) concepts about the relationship between written and oral language usage,

e) concepts about words, letters, capitals, space and punctuation.

Since the test was standardized in New Zealand, the norms should be used with caution. Scoring for the study participants was determined by the percentage of correct answers and the norm-referenced scores were not used.

Source: Heinemann Educational Books
70 Court Street
Portsmouth, NH 03801

Name	Sex	D.O.B.	*Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test	**Concepts About Print		Marital Status of Parents
				Letter Identification	Concepts	
Michael H.	M	11/17/80	105	70%	33%	Married
Claudia	F	10/04/80	118	69%	50%	Married
Erika	F	10/04/80	123	78%	46%	Married
Jackie	F	9/29/80	88	48%	21%	Divorced
Sarah	F	6/06/81	97	11%	42%	Married
Adam	M	8/09/81	99	43%	25%	Married
Michael S.	M	4/24/81	101	76%	38%	Married
Sheona	F	8/24/81	118	59%	54%	Married

*See Note 1
**See Note 2

Figure 1. A descriptive summary of the eight children selected as informants.

Play with objects
specific
generic
foodstuffs, e.g. macaroni
toy vehicles, e.g. truck
plastic animals
dolls, stuffed animals, puppets
drawings, flannel pieces
blocks, lego's
sand, clay, play-doh
wooden beads
Play like someone or something
TV/movie
functional
family/animal
occupational
Superman
He-Man
Spiderman
Dukes of Hazard
phone caller/receiver
consumer/boss
one who eats, drinks, serves
reader, writer
driver/typist
cook/babysitter
father, husband
daughter, sister
sweetheart
Grandma
pony
mother, wife
son, brother
baby, kid
Aunt/Uncle
cat/dog
nurse
robber
travel agent
banker
testor
fisherman
baker
librarian
waitress
interviewer
mailman
office worker
doctor
teacher
fireman
Making up
people
places
things
boyfriends
phone callers
customers
friends
husbands
students
children
beach
flea market
circus
stores
noises
stories
plays
shows
walls
car trunk
equipment
Pretend play schemes
flea market
theater
boat
beach
camp out
trips
dining out
house
babies
dress-up
mail
police
doctor
dentist
travel agency
bank
store
beauty parlor
pharmacy
office
bakery
school
library
taxi
firehall
train
restaurant
ice cream truck
Episodes

Figure 2. A taxonomy of kinds of pretend play activity.

1. Locate a collection of voluntary transformations, i.e., one or more of each of the following transformations or changes:

- decontextualization

  (changes in the here and now),

- self/other transformations

  (changes in the you and me),

- object substitutions

  (changes in the this and that).

2. Look for an announcement, assigning or adoption of roles among players.

3. Listen for a stated or implied topic or plan, e.g., play house, play bank, take a trip, cook.

4. Note a detailing of the topic, e.g., the baby is sick or money is needed for a trip or there is a need to prepare for something.

5. Observe if the players negotiate and sustain the collection of voluntary transformations around the topic long enough for the topic to be developed. (In the study, this appeared to require at least five minutes of play.)

Figure 3. A procedure for isolating pretend play episodes in streams of pretend play activity.

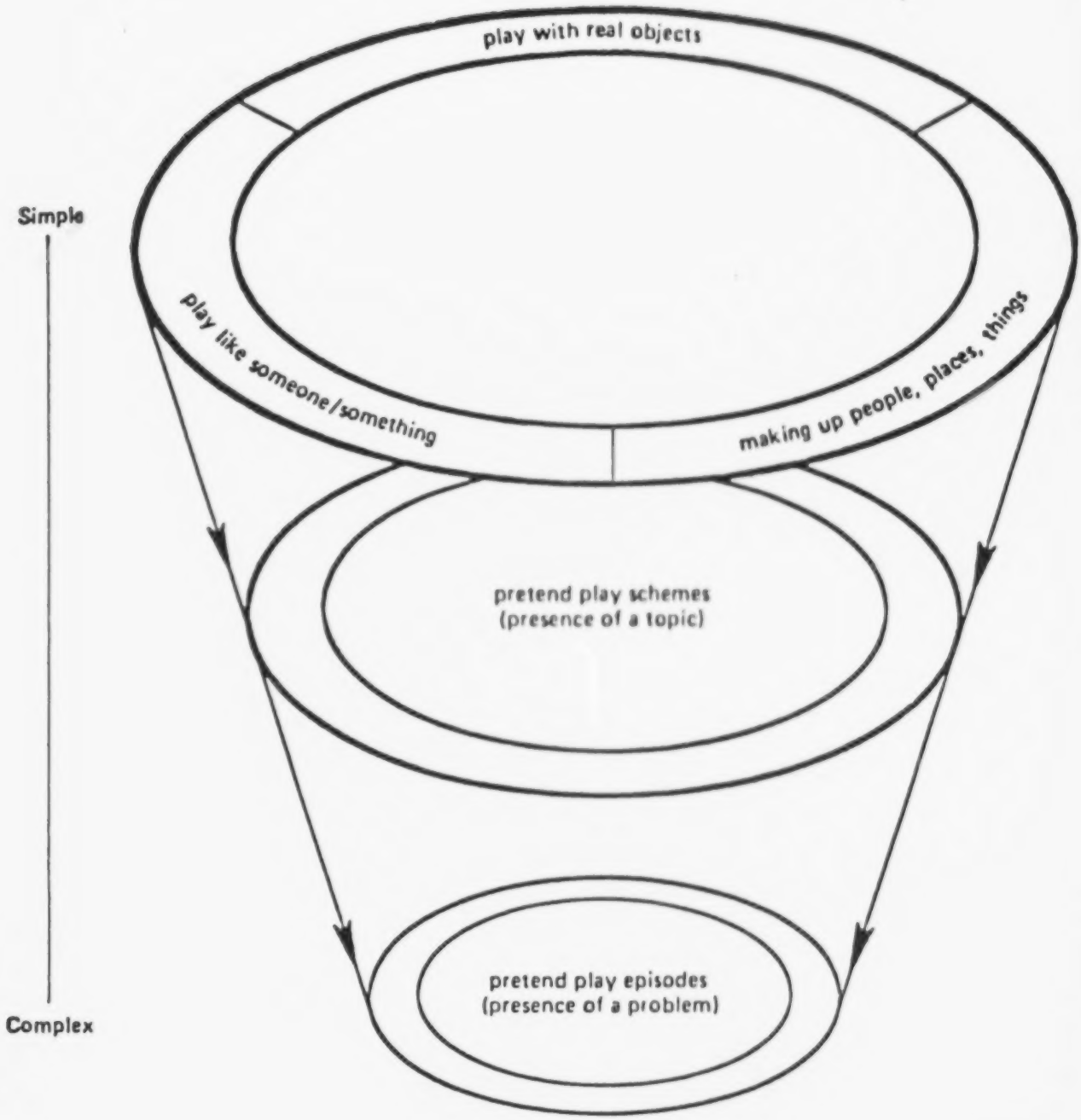
play with real objects
play like someone/something
making up people, places, things
pretend play schemes
(presence of a topic)
pretend play episodes
(presence of a problem)
Simple
Complex

Figure 4. Relationship between kinds of pretend play activity.